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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, July 7, 1941

Subject: "KEEPING FOOD SAFE IN HOT WEATHER." Information from the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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This summer you can help your country in at least two important ways. One way is to take extra care not to waste food, especially foods like milk and eggs, needed by your country in its defense job. Another way to help your country is to keep your whole family in good health. See that the food your youngsters eat is fresh and in good condition so they'll avoid those upsets that are all too common in hot weather. So you can help yourself, your family, and your country by proper care of food. If you haven't a copy of the Department of Agriculture's bulletin on "Care of Food in the Home," you are welcome to one while the free supply lasts. ("Care of Food in the Home" is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1374. A postcard addressed to the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., will bring it to you.) This bulletin tells how and where to keep the different kinds of food.

Most housewives today know that milk and cream are among the most perishable and easily contaminated of all foods. You know that the milk bottle should be rinsed off and put in the refrigerator as soon as possible after the milkman delivers it. You know milk should be kept covered and in the coldest part of the refrigerator. When you must have milk out to cook with, or to serve at the table, get it back to the refrigerator as soon as possible afterward. Don't let it set around in the heat.

Eggs also need to be kept in the refrigerator or some other cold place if they are to be fresh, wholesome, and best in flavor.



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As you would expect, foods made with milk or eggs need a cold keeping-place, too. Foods like custard puddings and pies, cream pies and puddings, cream puffs, chocolate eclairs, cake with custard filling and mayonnaise or cooked salad dressing. Spoilage bacteria grow very rapidly in these soft moist foods in a warm place. Only a few hours in a warm kitchen or in a picnic basket on a warm day--only a few hours in the heat and spoilage has a chance to start. The worst of it is that these foods very often show no signs of spoilage in taste, odor or looks. You don't know anything is the matter until you get sick.

Just to show you how careless people are about keeping these foods safe, let me give you a couple of figures from a recent health report from one State. The report lists 17 different outbreaks of food poisoning and one thousand 246 people sick--all from cream-filled pastries, mostly cream puffs and chocolate eclairs. The Department of Health at New Jersey some years ago made a rule for bakeries that "all pastry fillings containing milk, eggs or cream, whether cooked or uncooked, in the pastry shell or not, should be cooled promptly to below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and kept at the temperature until delivered to the customer." Of course, after that it's up to the housewife to see that these cream pastries get right into the refrigerator.

Salads made with egg salad dressing also need to be kept cold to be kept safe for eating. Don't let your potato salad or your chicken salad sit for hours in a picnic basket on a hot day. If you do, you can expect stomach aches in the family.

While we're on the subject of keeping foods safe at picnics, here are some further tips from home economists of the Department of Agriculture. First tip: If you picnic a lot, you'll be wise to invest in a picnic basket or case with compartments for holding ice--or a thermos jug with a large mouth that will keep food cold. If you go picnicking occasionally, you can wrap food in wax paper and pack it in ice in a large pail or tub.



The picnic foods you need to be especially careful about keeping cold are: ground cooked meat; meat or egg sandwich fillings; fish; salads and salad dressings; and custards or other soft desserts. Most picnic foods keep better, and taste better if you make them just before starting out. The exceptions are potato salad and deviled eggs. You can prepare these ahead of time, but you should chill them immediately and keep them cold until you eat them.

Here's how to keep vegetables and fruits at their best on a picnic. Wash and keep them fresh and crisp in the refrigerator until just before you start out. Then wrap them in waxed paper, and pack them in ice or a cold thermos jug. Keep them cool until you eat them. Fruits and vegetables not only taste and look best when they are fresh; they have more vitamin value then.

Well, there are just a few suggestions about saving food and keeping well in hot weather. You can get more details in that Department of Agriculture bulletin, "Care of Food in the Home." No. 1374.

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